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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAP](#) [MARR](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: STEADY PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN FIRST ROUND OF
COLOMBIA DCA NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. 2008 BOGOTA 4083
[1](#)B. 2008 SECSTATE 128033
[1](#)C. BOGOTA 0383

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) U.S. and Colombian delegations made steady progress in the first round of negotiations on a defense cooperation agreement (DCA). Citing regional tensions, the Colombian delegation attempted to include U.S. security guarantees in the text of the agreement, but later agreed to discuss these concerns in a separate forum. The Colombian officials said most of their proposed changes to the text were designed to curb any public perception that the GOC was ceding sovereignty to the United States under the DCA, and to avoid the need for ratification by Colombia's congress. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) U.S. and Colombian delegations convened in Bogota on February 10-12 for the first round of negotiations on the DCA. Deputy Foreign Minister Clemencia Forero, Deputy Defense Minister Juan Pinzon and Deputy Defense Minister Sergio Jaramillo led the Colombian delegation. PM Senior Advisor Ambassador Jackson McDonald headed the U.S. team consisting of State and DOD representatives (from PM, L/PM, JCS, OSD, SOUTHCOM, and U.S. Embassy Bogota).

SECURITY GUARANTEES: A SEPARATE DISCUSSION

[1](#)3. (C) The first day the Colombian delegation reiterated that the word "base" should be avoided and that the DCA should be completely "de-linked" from the Manta, Ecuador closure. The Colombians also pressed to include express provisions on USG security guarantees and support for an integrated air defense system in exchange for the underlying access rights. The Colombian delegation eventually agreed to address these two issues in separate exchanges with the USG outside of the DCA negotiations. The remainder of the plenary negotiations saw slow but steady progress, establishing bracketed text on the preamble, definitions, access rights, payment of fees, respect for national laws, criminal jurisdiction, and privileges and immunities.

KEY CONCERNS: PUBLIC PERCEPTION, SOVEREIGNTY

¶4. (C) During the negotiations, the Colombian delegation repeatedly expressed concern about how the DCA would be perceived by the Colombian public and by neighboring countries, especially Venezuela. Vice Defense Minister Sergio Jaramillo explained that many of the GOC's proposed edits to the draft text (such as provisions on access and jurisdiction) were designed to curb any public perception that Colombia was ceding sovereignty to the United States under the DCA. Both Forero and Jaramillo emphasized that the DCA must be linked to the existing framework and authorities under earlier bilateral and multi-lateral agreements, since any new "stand-alone" provisions could be subject to challenge by Colombia's constitutional court or Congress--steps the GOC wants to avoid.

NEXT STEPS

¶5. (C) In a February 12 meeting, President Uribe told Ambassador Brownfield that he wished to conclude the DCA as soon as possible. As the first round concluded, both sides agreed the next plenary should place on March 12-13, preceded on March 10-11 by technical negotiations on issues such as criminal jurisdiction and access rights to commercially-managed airports and seaports.

¶6. (U) This cable was reviewed by Ambassador McDonald.
BROWNFIELD